Air Resources Board

Linda S. Adams
Secretary for Environmental Protection

Mary D. Nichols, Chairman
1001 I Street • P.O. Box 2815
Sacramento, California 95812 • www.arb.ca.gov

Arnold Schwarzenegger
Governor

December 17, 2007

Mr. Sean Hogan, Chief
Technical Support Office (AIR-7)
United States Environmental Protection Agency
Region IX
75 Hawthorne Street
San Francisco, California 94105

Dear Mr. Hogan:

This letter provides preliminary documentation to support our request to flag PM2.5 air quality data affected by multiple wildfires that occurred from July through November 2007. On March 22, 2007, the United Stated Environmental Protection Agency (U.S. EPA) adopted the 'Treatment of Data Influenced by Exceptional Events' rule which allows data to be flagged and thus excluded from consideration during the decision-making process related to the attainment status of an area. This rule, which became effective on May 22, 2007, requires that States submit documentation to support flagging to the appropriate U.S. EPA Regional Office.

Although complete Federal Reference Method (FRM) PM2.5 data for the calendar year 2007 is not yet available, the Air Resources Board (ARB) has identified potential monitoring days which may have been impacted by these exceptional events. The ARB, along with the local air pollution control districts, used PM2.5 Beta Attenuation Monitor (BAM) data to identify potential wildfire impacts. The focus of this initial documentation is on those areas where the flagging of the data could affect the designation status for the revised 24-hour PM2.5 standard. Attachment 1 contains ARB's initial analysis of these exceptional events with the limited amount of data available. The document was made available for public review and no comments were received. Attachment 2 contains supporting documentation submitted by the San Diego County and Ventura County Air Pollution Control Districts.

Additional FRM data from other sites and dates during this period may be flagged as natural events due to wildfires when the final filter-based data is submitted to the U.S. EPA's Air Quality System (AQS). Full documentation on the wildfires and their impacts on air quality will be supplied once complete PM2.5 FRM data is available.

If you have any questions regarding the enclosed documentation, please contact Ms. Sylvia Zulawnick, Manager, Particulate Matter Analysis Section, at (916) 324-7163, or via email at szulawni@arb.ca.gov.

Sincerely,

/s/

Karen Magliano, Chief
Air Quality Data Branch
Planning and Technical Support Division

Enclosures

cc: Ms. Sylvia Zulawnick, Manager
Particulate Matter Analysis Section
Planning and Technical Support Division

EXCEPTIONAL EVENTS

Date: July through November, 2007
Districts: Northern Sierra
San Diego County
Ventura County
Events: Wildfire Smoke and High Winds

The following information has been compiled for monitoring sites where the data could affect the designation status for the new PM2.5 standard. These areas are the Northern Sierra Air Pollution Control District (NSAPCD), the San Diego County Air Pollution Control District (San Diego APCD) and the Ventura County Air Pollution Control District (Ventura APCD).

Although other monitoring sites in other Districts were affected by the wildfires, they either did not exceed the federal PM2.5 24-hour standard of 35 ug/m3 or their inclusion would not affect the Districts' attainment status. If needed, the Air Resources Board (ARB) will pursue additional exceptional event exemptions within the normal Exceptional Events Rule timeline.

Separate documentation will be provided by other Districts, particularly the San Joaquin Valley Air Pollution Control District (San Joaquin APCD) and the South Coast Air Pollution Control District (South Coast APCD) for flagging data from monitoring sites affected by wildfires.

The following information is provided:

1) List of fires;
2) Potential air quality monitoring samples affected by the fires;
3) Satellite images of smoke impacts; and
4) District public notification.

2007 Wildfires Affecting Air Quality

The following wildfires affected the air quality of several areas in California from July, 2007 to November, 2007.

Table 1: Wildfires in California from July to October, 2007

Fire Name	Date of Origin	Nearby City/County
Zaca	7/4/07	Santa Barbara/Santa Barbara
Antelope Complex	7/5/07	Antelope Lake/Plumas
Elk Complex	7/10/07	Yreka/Siskiyou
Grouse	8/27/07	Porterville/Kern
Lick	9/3/07	Gilroy/Santa Clara
Moonlight	9/3/07	Greenville/Plumas
Butler 2	9/14/07	San Bernardino/San Bernardino
Ranch	10/20/07	Castaic/Los Angeles
Buckweed	10/21/07	Palmdale/Los Angeles
Canyon	10/21/07	Malibu/Los Angeles
McCoy	10/21/07	Julian/San Diego
Roca	10/21/07	Aguanga/Riverside
Santiago	10/21/07	Santa Ana/Orange
Sedgewick	10/21/07	Los Olivos/Santa Barbara
Witch	10/21/07	Ramona/San Diego
Cajon	10/22/07	Lytle Creek/San Bernardino
Coronado Hills	10/22/07	San Marcos/San Diego
Grass Valley	10/22/07	Lake Arrowhead/San Bernardino
Harris	10/22/07	Portrero/San Diego
Magic	10/22/07	Santa Clarita/Los Angeles
Rice	10/22/07	Fallbrook/Los Angeles
Slide	10/22/07	Green Valley Lake/San Bernardino
Ammo	10/23/07	San Clemente/San Diego
Poomacha	10/23/07	Pauma Valley/San Diego

Air Quality Monitoring Sites Impacted by 2007 Wildfires

PM2.5 monitoring sites throughout California were affected by smoke from the numerous wildfires from July to early November, 2007. There are two types of PM2.5 monitors operated in California; Federal Reference Monitors (FRM) and Beta Attenuation Monitors (BAM). Data from the filter-based FRMs has not been completely finalized. In the absence of FRM data, BAM measurements can provide an indication of days of possible PM2.5 exceedance. Preliminary data from these monitors are shown below.

Figure 1: Mountain Counties Air Basin PM2.5 BAM Monitoring Sites during the Antelope Complex Fire, July, 2007.

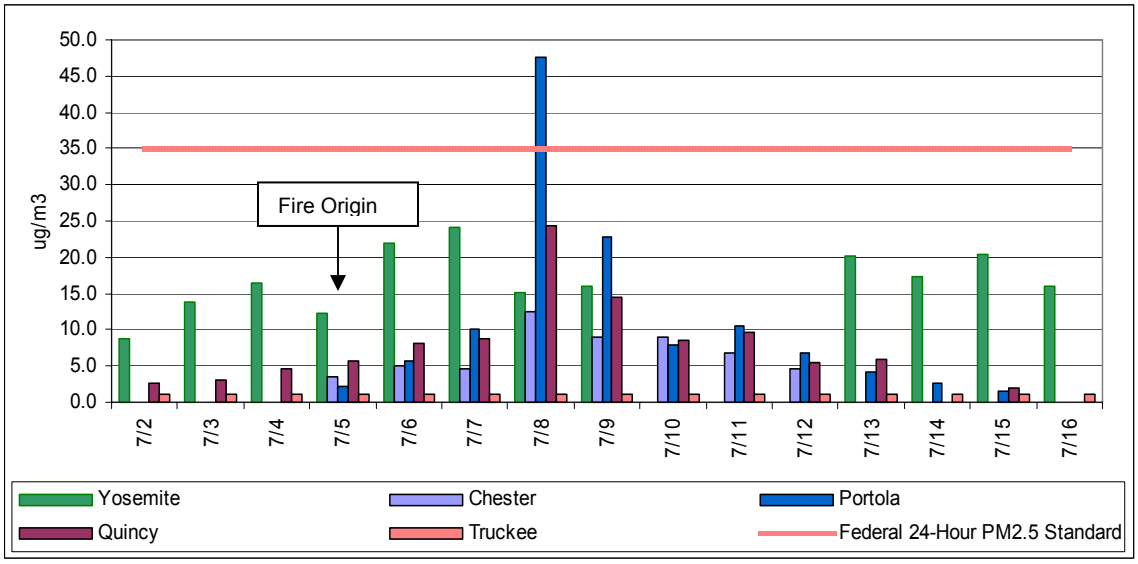


Figure 2: Mountain Counties Air Basin PM2.5 Monitoring Sites during the Moonlight Fire, September, 2007.

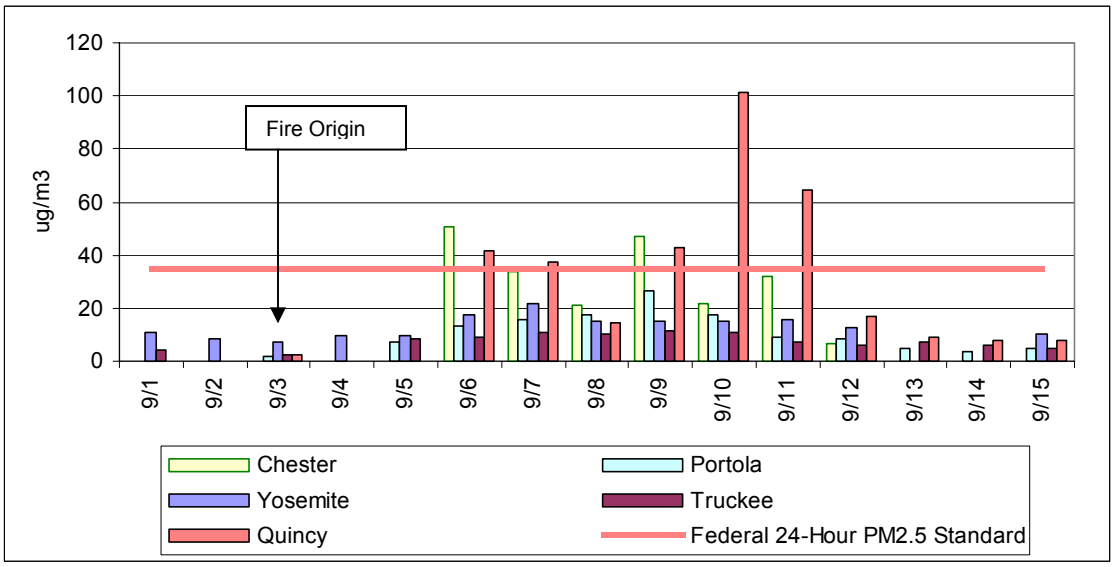


Figure 3: Selected Sacramento Valley Air Basin PM2.5 Monitoring Sites during the Moonlight Fire, September, 2007.

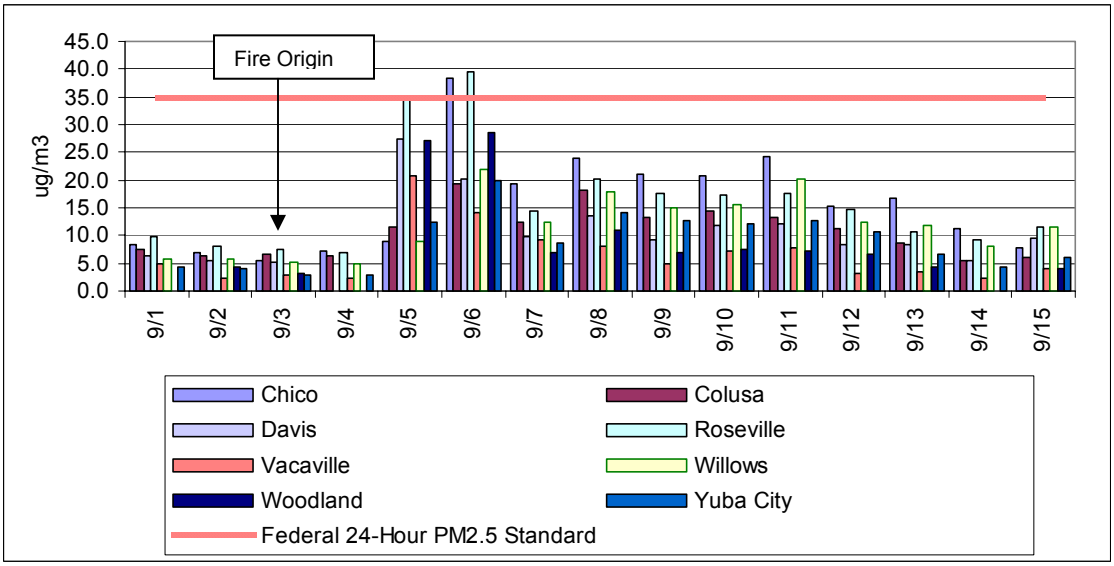


Figure 4: San Diego County APCD PM2.5 BAM Monitoring Sites during the October 2007 Wildfires.

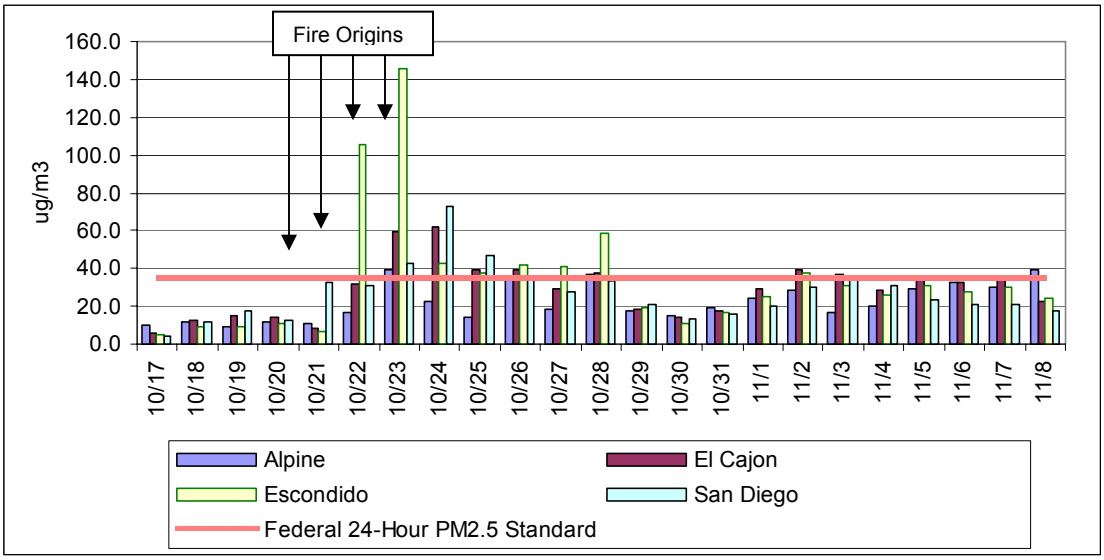
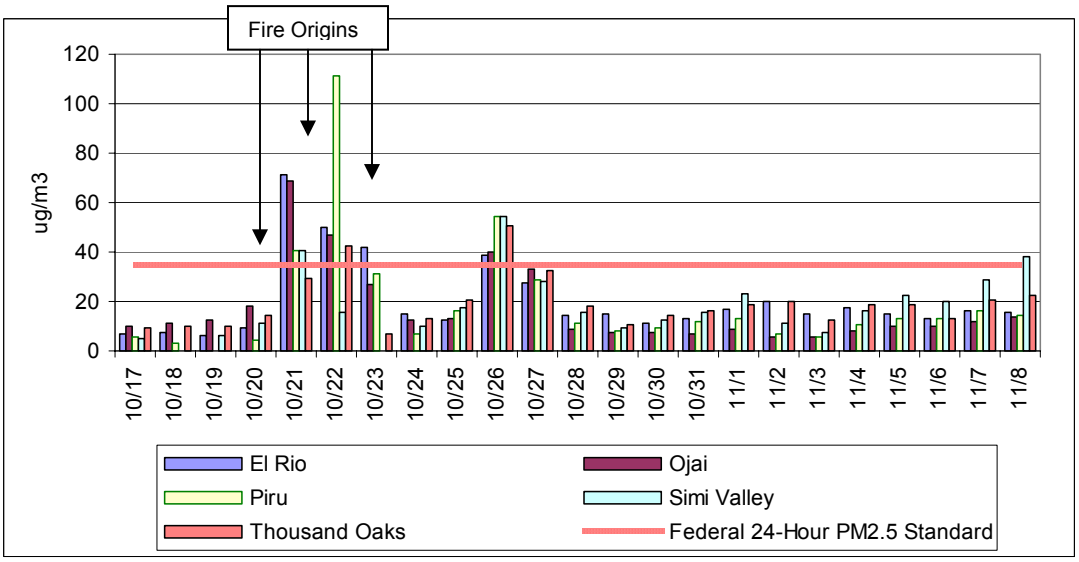


Figure 5: Ventura County APCD PM2.5 BAM Monitoring Sites during the October 2007 Wildfires.



Several of the days shown in the figures above correspond with FRM scheduled monitoring days. These days, and the corresponding monitoring sites, are noted in Table 2. ARB believes that these days should be flagged as exceptional events.

Table 2: PM2.5 BAM Measurements on FRM Scheduled Monitoring Days During California Wildfires from July to November, 2007.

Event	Monitoring District/Site	AIRS ID	FRM scheduled monitoring day	PM2.5 BAM Measurement	Preliminary PM2.5 FRM Concentration
ANTELOPE COMPLEX FIRE					
	NORTHERN SIERRA				
	Portola	60631009	7/8/07	47.5	41
MOONLIGHT FIRE					
	NORTHERN SIERRA				
	Quincy	60631006	9/6/07	41.8	tbd
			9/9/07	42.8	tbd
	SACRAMENTO VALLEY				
	No BAM sites exceeded Federal standard on scheduled FRM monitoring days				
SOUTHERN CALIFORNIA WILDFIRES					
	SAN DIEGO				
	Chula Vista	607300001	10/24/07	*	78
			11/2/07	*	36
	El Cajon	60730003	10/24/07	62	27
			11/2/07	39	36
			11/5/07	35	31
	Escondido	60731002	10/22/07	105	124
			10/23/07	146	126
			10/24/07	43	39
			10/25/07	38	36
			10/26/07	42	38
			10/27/07	41	38
			10/28/07	59	53
			11/2/07	38	44
			11/5/07	31	36
			11/6/07	28	48
	San Diego – Beardsley	60731010	10/21/07	33	37
			10/23/07	42	41
			10/24/07	73	70
			10/25/07	47	49
			10/26/07	36	33
			11/3/07	36	37
	VENTURA				
	El Rio	61113001	10/21/07	71	tbd
	Piru	61110009	10/21/07	40	tbd
	Simi Valley	61112002	10/21/07	40	tbd
* - not a BAM site tbd – to be determined					

Satellite Images of 2007 Wildfires

The satellite images below show the Antelope Complex Fire (Figure 6), the Moonlight Fire (Figures 7 through 9), and the Southern California October Fires (Figure 10). Smoke from these fires can be seen impacting surrounding areas.

Antelope Complex Fire

Figure 6: Terra satellite MODIS image showing Antelope Complex Fire and subsequent smoke plume on July 8, 2007 at 1137 local time.

Moonlight Fire

Figure 7, taken on September 5, shows smoke moving southwest and then spreading both east and west over the Mountain Counties, Sacramento Valley, and San Joaquin Valley. Figure 8, taken on September 7, shows that the smoke plume also affected areas east of the fire.

Figure 7: Geostationary satellite (GOES) image showing Moonlight Fire and subsequent smoke plume on September 5, 2007 at 1430 UTC.

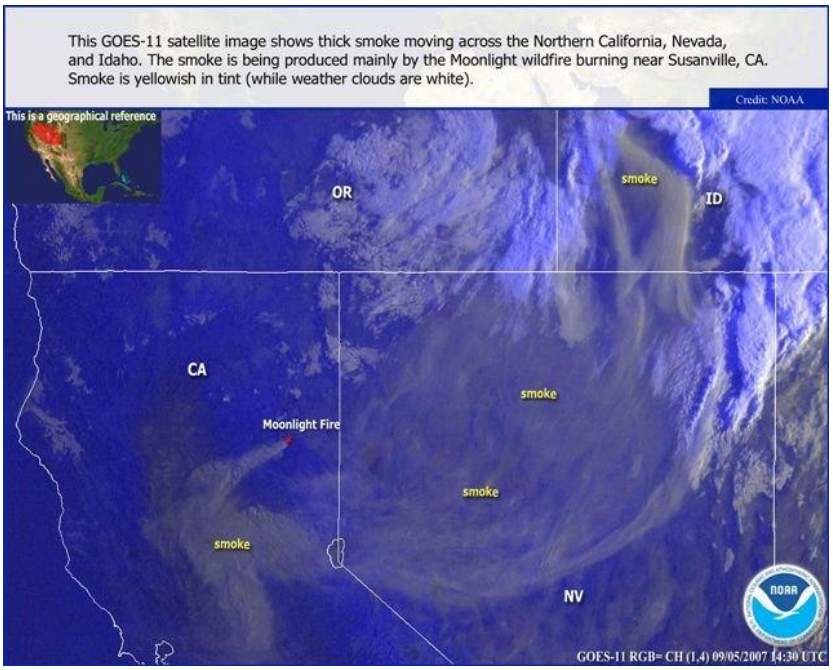


Figure 8: Geostationary satellite (GOES) image showing Moonlight Fire and subsequent smoke plume on September 7 2007 at 1500 UTC.

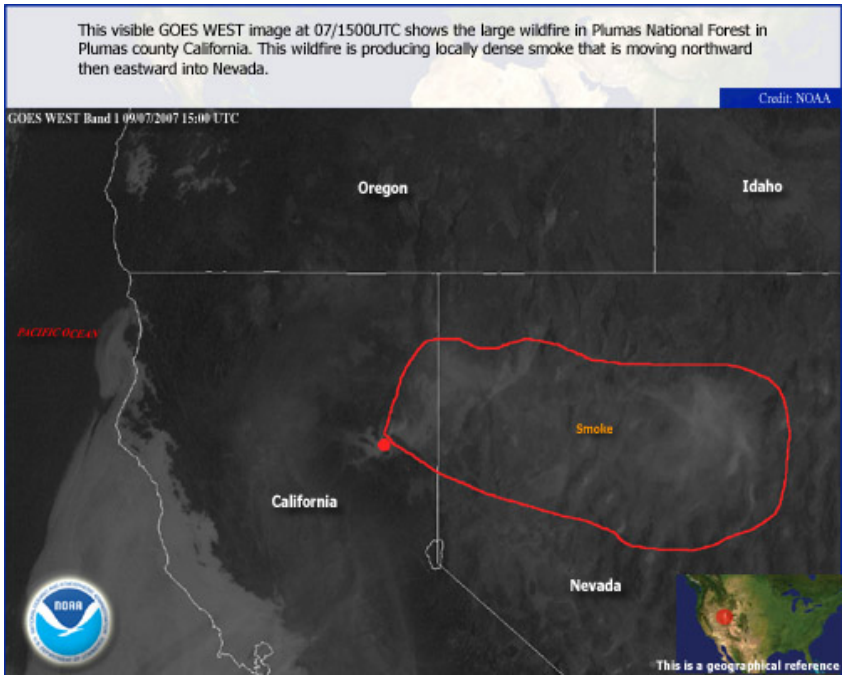


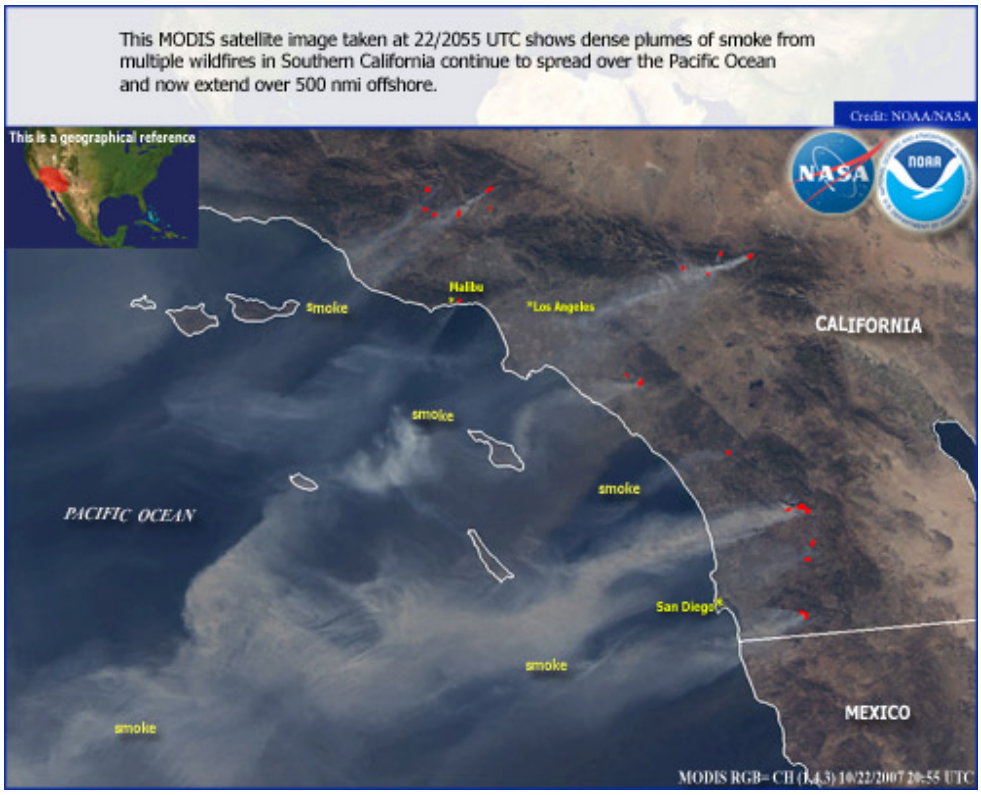
Figure 9 shows the Moonlight Fire on September 10. The area of smoke impact is again west and southwest of the original fire, towards the Sacramento Valley.

Figure 9: Terra satellite MODIS image showing Moonlight Fire and subsequent smoke plume on September 10, 2007 at 1430 UTC.

Southern California Wildfires

The satellite image below shows several fires with resulting smoke being transported westward by strong Santa Ana winds.

Figure 10: Satellite image of Southern California Wildfires on October 22, 2007 at 2055 UTC



Public Notification and Mitigation

Information regarding public notification of smoke impacts is attached. The Air Pollution Control Districts posted basic information and health advisories on their websites. Numerous media sources (newspapers, television, radio, and internet) provided both information on the fires and the impacts of smoke on health and property.

Notices for July 2007 Antelope Complex Fire

InciWeb - Wildland Fire and Incident Information System

Wildfire/smoke Advisory

Incident: Moonlight
Released: 9/5/2007

NORTHERN SIERRA AIR QUALITY MANAGEMENT DISTRICT **GRETCHEN BENNITT, APCO**

Quincy Field Office

270 Hospital Rd., Suite 127

Quincy, CA 95971

(530) 283-4654 / FAX: (530) 283-0699

email: george@myairdistrict.com

SEPTEMBER 5, 2007

AIR QUALITY ADVISORY - SMOKE PLUMAS COUNTY, SIERRA COUNTY AND NEVADA COUNTY

Smoke from the Moonlight Fire in northeast Plumas County has spread across large portions of the counties of Plumas, Sierra and Nevada. In the early morning hours, the smoke plume was travelling west to Butte County, then southward before curving back to the east and into the foothills. The smoke plume is forecast to move east as the day progresses. Accordingly, the western portions of the northern Sierras should clear first, while smoke concentrations may increase in the eastern portions, including the Truckee area. However, the smoke may move back to the foothills tonight. Tomorrow (September 6), residual smoke is expected to clear by mid-morning with the arrival of west and southwest winds.

During periods when the smoke is especially dense, air quality may fall into the "very unhealthy" range. If you smell smoke, or see smoke around you, consider restricting your outside activities. Until the present conditions improve, individuals should consider taking the following actions:

•· Healthy people should delay strenuous exercise, particularly when they can smell smoke.

•· Children and elderly people should consider avoiding outdoor activities, particularly prolonged

outdoor exertion.

•· People with health-related illnesses, particularly asthma and respiratory problems, should remain indoors.

•· Asthmatics should follow their asthma management plan.

•· Contact your doctor if you have symptoms such as chest pain, chest tightness, shortness of breath, or severe fatigue. This is important for not only people with chronic lung or heart disease, but also for individuals who have not been previously diagnosed with such illnesses. Smoke can "unmask" or produce symptom of such diseases.

•· Keep airways moist by drinking lots of water. Breathing through a warm, wet washcloth can also help relieve dryness.

Studies have linked fine particulate matter (smoke) with significant health problems, including work and school absences, respiratory related hospital admissions, aggravated asthma, acute respiratory symptoms (including severe chest pain, gasping, and aggravated coughing), chronic bronchitis, decreased lung function, and premature death.

A good internet site for fire information is http://www.yubanet.com/, and a satellite view depicting the smoke plume is available via www.wrh.noaa.gov/sto by clicking "Satellite Imagery" on the left and choosing the "Visible, Western US, 1km Resolution" option. Please do not call 911 for information; call only to report an emergency, such as a fire you can see.

Advisory for Wednesday, September 5 and Thursday, September 6, 2007

Notices for September 2007 Moonlight Fire

InciWeb - Wildland Fire and Incident Information System

Wildfire/smoke Advisory

Incident: Moonlight
Released: 9/5/2007

NORTHERN SIERRA AIR QUALITY MANAGEMENT DISTRICT **GRETCHEN BENNITT, APCO**

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Advisory for Wednesday, September 5 and Thursday, September 6, 2007

Smoke-Related Health Advisory Issued

Smoke-Related Health Advisory Issued

September 05, 2007

The Moonlight Fire, burning in the Plumas National Forest, is creating smoky conditions in Placer County, prompting the Placer County Health and Human Services Department and Placer County Air Pollution Control District to issue a health advisory.

"In a nutshell, if you can see or smell smoke, you should limit outdoor physical activities, and strongly consider canceling outdoor sporting events and other group physical activities," Placer County Health Officer Dr. Richard Burton said.

People should generally avoid physical exertion during smoky conditions. Particularly affected are children and the elderly.

Dr. Burton and Air Pollution Control Officer Tom Christofk advise residents to take the situation into account as they plan activities.

Smoky conditions vary considerably in Placer County, because of the terrain and the weather. A specific location therefore may be smoky at one point and clear at another. Depending on where you are, you may or may not be impacted, and the situation could change very quickly.

If you are in an area where you can see or smell smoke, until conditions improve, consider the following recommendations:

- Healthy people should delay strenuous exercise.
- Children and elderly people should consider avoiding outdoor activities, particularly prolonged outdoor exertion.
- People with health-related illnesses, particularly respiratory problems, should remain indoors.
- Using paper mask filters, which are not capable of filtering extra-fine smoke particles, and which restrict airflow, is not recommended.
- Stay inside with doors and windows shut. Use the recycle or re-circulate mode on the air conditioner in your home or car. Avoid cooking and vacuuming, which can increase pollutants indoors.
- Asthmatics should follow their asthma-management plan.
- Contact your doctor if you have symptoms such as chest pain, chest tightness, shortness of breath, or severe fatigue. This is important for not only people with chronic lung or heart disease, but also for individuals who have not been previously diagnosed with such illnesses. Smoke can "unmask" or produce symptom of such diseases.
- Keep airways moist by drinking lots of water. Breathing through a warm, wet washcloth can also help relieve dryness.

Smoke Advisory Update

September 06, 2007

The Moonlight Fire, burning in the Plumas National Forest, has created smoky conditions in Placer County, prompting the Placer County Health and Human Services Department and Placer County Air Pollution Control District to issue a health advisory on Wednesday.

This advisory remains in effect today. However winds are expected to disperse the smoke over the next 24 hours.

"As a reminder, if you can see or smell smoke, you should limit outdoor physical activities, and strongly consider canceling outdoor sporting events and other group physical activities," Placer County Health Officer Dr. Richard Burton said.

As always, smoky conditions vary considerably in Placer County, because of the terrain and the weather. A specific location therefore may be smoky at one point and clear at another. Depending on where you are, you may or may not be impacted, and the situation could change very quickly.

People should generally avoid physical exertion during smoky conditions. Particularly affected are children and the elderly.

Dr. Burton and Air Pollution Control Officer Tom Christofk advise residents to take the situation into account as they plan activities.

If you are in an area where you can see or smell smoke, until conditions improve, consider the following recommendations:

- Healthy people should delay strenuous exercise.
- Children and elderly people should consider avoiding outdoor activities, particularly prolonged outdoor exertion.
- People with health-related illnesses, particularly respiratory problems, should remain indoors.
- Using paper mask filters, which are not capable of filtering extra-fine smoke particles, and which restrict airflow, is not recommended.
- Stay inside with doors and windows shut. Use the recycle or re-circulate mode on the air conditioner in your home or car. Avoid cooking and vacuuming, which can increase pollutants indoors.
- Asthmatics should follow their asthma-management plan.
- Contact your doctor if you have symptoms such as chest pain, chest tightness, shortness of breath, or severe fatigue. This is important for not only people with chronic lung or heart disease, but also for individuals who have not been previously diagnosed with such illnesses. Smoke can "unmask" or produce symptom of such diseases.
- Keep airways moist by drinking lots of water. Breathing through a warm, wet washcloth can also help relieve dryness.

Notices for October 2007 Wildfires in Southern California

Ventura County Air Pollution Control District

Air Quality Forecast + Agricultural Burn Status

Air Quality Advisory

Due to the smoke from many of the wildfires in and around Ventura County, it is possible that almost all areas of Ventura County will encounter smoke at some time. Air Quality in areas affected by the smoke are considered to be unhealthful. If you smell smoke, be cautious and use common sense to protect your family's health. Everyone, especially people with heart or lung disease (including asthma), older adults and children should limit time spent outdoors, and limit strenuous or heavy exertion. If you have symptoms of lung or heart disease that may be related to smoke exposure (including wheezing, coughing, shortness of breath or difficulty breathing, chest tightness or pain, palpitations, fatigue or unusual fatigue) please contact your health care provider. This advisory will be extended as conditions warrant. If you have questions contact VCAPCD, Kent Field or Mallory Hart at 805 662-6960 or 645-1400.

Agricultural Burn Regions

1. Coastal (Ventura / Oxnard / Camarillo)
2. Ojai Valley
3. Fillmore and Piru
4. Simi Valley and Moorpark
5. Conejo Valley (Thousand Oaks)
6. Northern Ventura County

Agricultural Burn Status for Tuesday, October 23, 2007

Burn Region	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
Early Morning (7 a.m. - 10 a.m.)	No	No	No	No	No	No	No
Late Morning (10 a.m. - noon)	No	No	No	No	No	No	No
Afternoon (noon - 4 p.m.)	No	No	No	No	No	No	No
Permit Must be Obtained from a Ventura County Fire Station							

Ventura County Air Pollution Control District

Air Quality Forecast + Agricultural Burn Status

Air Quality Advisory

Due to the smoke from many of the wildfires in and around Ventura County, it is possible that almost all areas of Ventura County will encounter smoke at some time. Air Quality in areas affected by the smoke are considered to be unhealthful. The Santa Ana winds are decreasing and the air quality is getting better. And there will be periods of time where the air quality is "Good." And there will be periods when it will be "Unhealthy". If you smell smoke, be cautious and use common sense to protect your family's health. Everyone, especially people with heart or lung disease (including asthma), older adults and children should limit time spent outdoors, and limit prolonged or heavy exertion. If you or your family is experiencing health problems, contact your health care provider. This advisory will be extended as conditions warrant. If you have questions contact VCAPCD, Kent Field or Mallory Ham at 805 662-6960 or 645-1400.

Agricultural Burn Regions

1. Coastal (Ventura / Oxnard / Camarillo)
2. Ojai Valley
3. Fillmore and Piru
4. Simi Valley and Moorpark
5. Conejo Valley (Thousand Oaks)
6. Northern Ventura County

Agricultural Burn Status for Thursday, October 25, 2007

Burn Region	1	2	3	4	5	6 < 3k ft	6 > 3k ft
Early Morning (7 a.m. - 10 a.m.)	No	No	No	No	No	No	No
Late Morning (10 a.m. - noon)	No	No	No	No	No	No	No
Afternoon (noon - 4 p.m.)	No	No	No	No	No	No	No

Permit Must be Obtained from a Ventura County Fire Station

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE
October 21, 2007

Public Health Contacts:
Michele Mickiewicz, Public Information Officer, 805-451-3497 (cell)
Elliot Schulman, MD, MPH, Public Health Department Director, County Health Officer, 805-681-5105

APCD Contacts:
Bobbie Bratz, Public Information Officer, 805-455-6403 (cell)

Air Quality Health Advisory Continues

The health advisory issued yesterday by Santa Barbara County Public Health Department and the Santa Barbara County Air Pollution Control District (APCD) remains in effect. Air quality is unhealthful for all residents due to high winds that are blowing ash that is left over from the Zaca Fire as well as smoke from the Sedgwick Fire that is currently burning north east of Figueroa Mountain. There is currently an evacuation warning in place for the Woodstock community due to the Sedgwick Fire. There is also the possibility of smoke that will blow into Santa Barbara County from a fire burning near Piru in Ventura County.

Residents living in areas impacted by these fires and wind conditions are advised by County health and air quality officials to remain indoors, minimize time spent outdoors and limit prolonged or heavy exertion while outdoors. In addition, residents are advised to keep windows and doors closed to minimize air flow indoors. These precautions are recommended for all residents and especially for people with respiratory and heart conditions.

Dr. Elliot Schulman, County Health Officer, said, “As always when air quality is considered unhealthful, people with asthma or other respiratory diseases or heart conditions should monitor their health conditions and consult with their health care providers if their symptoms worsen.”

# # #

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE
October 23, 2007

Public Health Contacts:
Michele Mickiewicz, Public Information Officer, 805-451-3497 (cell)
Elliot Schulman, MD, MPH, Public Health Department Director, County Health Officer, 805-681-5105

APCD Contacts:
Bobbie Bratz, Public Information Officer, 805-455-6403(cell)
Tom Murphy, APCD Division Manager, 805-403-1096

Air Quality Advisory for Smoke, Ash and Soot

Santa Barbara, CA — The Santa Barbara County Public Health Department and the Santa Barbara County Air Pollution Control District (APCD) have upgraded the precautionary advisory issued yesterday to an Air Quality Advisory for Santa Barbara County communities. Residents are advised to minimize time outdoors and avoid prolonged or heavy exertion. These precautions are especially important for people with respiratory and heart conditions.

The air quality conditions have degraded from Monday's levels due to high winds blowing smoke from the fires burning in southern California and continued impacts of ash and soot from the Zaca Fire.

Everyone is advised to be cautious and use common sense to protect your family's health, especially people with heart or lung disease (including asthma), older adults and children should limit time spent outdoors, and limit prolonged or heavy exertion. If you have symptoms of lung or heart disease that may be related to excess smoke or particulate exposure, including repeated coughing, shortness of breath or difficulty breathing, wheezing, chest tightness or pain, palpitations, nausea or unusual fatigue or lightheadedness, contact your health care provider.

Dr. Elliot Schulman, County Health Officer, said, "People are urged to continue being vigilant while the smoke and ash conditions continue. It is especially important for people with asthma or other respiratory diseases or heart conditions to monitor their health and consult with their health care providers if their symptoms worsen."

# # #

Book a Hotel
Hotels
Arrival: 7 Dec 07
Nights: 1
Rooms: 1
SEARCH
Or Call 800-590-1460
Packages
Attraction Tickets
Hot Deals
Group Rates

San Diego Fire 2007 News

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Wednesday 10:55pm

ADDITIONAL AMERICAN RED CROSS SHELTERS
The American Red Cross has opened the following additional shelters:
- Mount Miguel High School at 8585 Blossom Lane in Spring Valley
- The Rock Church for special needs evacuees at 2277 Rosecrans Street in San Diego
- Poway Community Park at 13094 Civic Center Drive in Poway

For a complete list of active shelters, visit the County of San Diego's Emergency Web site at www.sdcountyemergency.com.

Wednesday 7:45pm

State Park Closures and Reservation Cancellations

The following state parks in San Diego County are closed:
- San Pasqual Battlefield State Historic Park
- South Carlsbad State Beach
- Torrey Pines State Reserve

The following state parks have cancelled all reservations through October 31. Refunds are available:

- Cuyamaca Rancho State Park
- Palomar Mountain State Park
- San Elijo State Beach
- Silver Strand State Beach
- San Onofre State Beach - reservations are cancelled at the San Mateo Campground only

Wednesday 7:11pm
Boil Water Order for Calexico Lodge

A Boil Water Order has been issued for Calexico Lodge at 40248 Old Highway
80, Boulevard, 91905 effective immediately.

Due to the fires, this public water system lost pressure in its distribution system. The precautionary Boil Water Order will remain in effect until the
distribution system has been disinfected and laboratory results confirm the
absence of bacteria in the water supply.

Calexico Lodge immediately took steps to prevent the public from coming in
contact with the water by posting public notification.

For more information on the Boil Water Order, please contact Vern Schoore, at
(619) 766-4569.

Wednesday 6:44pm

The Air Pollution Control District has issued a Precautionary Smoke Advisory for the San Diego Air Basin, which encompasses San Diego County.

Small microscopic ash can enter the lungs through breathing in unhealthy air conditions. If you are in an area with visible smoke, or if

Wildfires, Strong Winds Continue to Create Unhealthful Air Quality Across the Southland

Oct. 23, 2007

Schools Urged to Curtail Outdoor Activities in Areas Affected by Smoke

Smoke and ash from numerous wildfires along with dust raised by strong winds continue to create unhealthful air quality throughout much of the Southland again today.

Air quality officials are advising all residents, and particularly school officials, to curtail outdoor activities if they can see or smell smoke or see falling ash.

Concentrations of fine particulate matter known as PM10 are at unhealthy levels in numerous areas directly impacted by smoke as well as high-wind areas in San Bernardino, Riverside, Orange, and Los Angeles counties.

In areas with unhealthy air quality, everyone should discontinue prolonged, vigorous outdoor exercise lasting longer than one hour. Examples of the kinds of outdoor activities that should be avoided are calisthenics, basketball, running, soccer, football, tennis, swimming laps, and water polo. Susceptible persons, such as those with heart or lung disease, should avoid outdoor activity entirely.

The strong Santa Ana condition that is bringing gusty winds from the northeast through and below the Southland's passes and canyons is expected to continue through today, decreasing on Wednesday.

For more tips on avoiding health impacts from the smoke, see http://www.aqmd.gov/pubinfo/factsheets.htm on AQMD's website.

AQMD is the air pollution control agency for Orange County and major portions of Los Angeles, San Bernardino and Riverside counties.

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This page updated: October 23, 2007
URL: http://www.aqmd.gov/news1/2007/SouthlandWildfiresOctober2007.html

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More Metro news

Air quality problems expected to linger

Smoke, ash could remain an issue for several weeks

By Robert Krier
UNION-TRIBUNE STAFF WRITER

11:43 p.m. October 23, 2007

Decreasing winds should help firefighters Wednesday, but smoke and ash are expected to continue to accumulate, worsening already unhealthy conditions in much of the county.

“It's going to be many days before these particles are out of the atmosphere,” said Bill Brick, senior meteorologist with the San Diego County Air Pollution Control District. “We won't have good air around the county until probably Saturday or Sunday.”

Rain or a strong marine layer would help dilute the growing concentrations of airborne particles and wash the pollutants out of the air, but no such weather pattern is expected to develop this week, said Ed Clark, warning coordination meteorologist for the National Weather Service in Rancho Bernardo.

Early in the week, forecasters thought a storm could bring rain by Saturday.

“We're going to have air-quality issues – potentially – for several weeks,” Brick said.

On Thanksgiving Day 2003, weeks after the Cedar, Paradise and Otay fires were mostly extinguished, winds kicked up dust and ash in the backcountry and created unhealthy conditions all the way to the coast.

Since the latest blazes began, winds blowing generally from the east have blown particulates – the term for dust, dirt, soot and smoke – more than 1,000 miles over the Pacific Ocean.

Some of that smoke could be sent back over the coast if the winds shift as expected tomorrow, Clark said.

“It will be diluted somewhat, but it will still be an onslaught of dirty air,” Brick said.

Several days after the start of the 2003 wildfires, a similar wind shift carried a blanket of smoke back over nearly the entire county.

Yesterday, some flames were pushed eastward, but not because of a shift in large-scale wind patterns, forecaster Noel Isla said. The fires actually create their own weather because the heat causes the air to rise and more air rushes in below, creating an underdraft.

According to air monitoring stations, Escondido has experienced the worst air quality so far this week. Particulate levels have been considered very unhealthy to hazardous at times. Nearly a dozen people were admitted to Palomar Medical Center in respiratory distress, Palomar Pomerado Health spokesman Andy Hoang said.

Fans and special industrial filters were set up along the corridors of every floor of the Escondido hospital. But it still smelled of smoke. Staffers said wafts of sooty air seemed to fill the halls when the winds changed or the elevator doors opened. Masks were available as a courtesy to visitors.

Prolonged exposure to unhealthy air can lead to respiratory, vision and other health problems, said Brick, the meteorologist. But many people initially feel no symptoms.

“You may feel all right now, but these things are cumulative,” said Brick, who advised that people remain indoors as much as possible and limit physical activity.

The Santa Ana winds, which peaked near 70 mph Monday, are expected to diminish. Winds should be in the 10 mph to 15 mph range today, and should be fairly calm tomorrow.

That would give firefighters a break. But humidity levels are expected to remain dangerously low today, and temperatures are expected to climb into the 90s in the inland valleys.

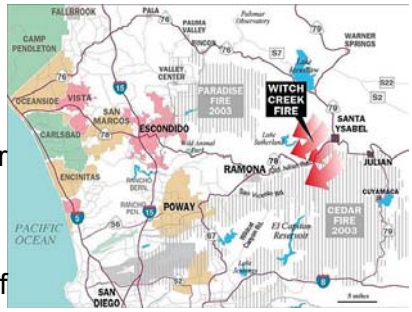
- Staff writer Cheryl Clark contributed to this report.

Robert Krier: (619) 293-2241; rob.krier@uniontrib.com

Friday, December 7, 2007
Last modified Friday, October 26, 2007 3:39 PM PDT

Ramona, surrounding area under mandatory evacuation

By: SARAH WILKINS - Staff Writer



Roads closed because of Ramona-area wildfire include:
- Highway 78 at Magnolia Avenue
- Highway 78 at Rancho Santa Teresa
- Highway 79 at Highway 78
- Old Julian Highway at Vista Ramona Road
- Highway 79 at Highway 76
---- Source: California Highway Patrol, as of 10:45 p.m.
Contacts and updates:
24-hour Community, Health and Disaster Information: Dial 211
County General Information Line: (858) 694-3900
County Office of Emergency Services fire updates: www.sdcountyemergency.com
San Diego Gas & Electric Co.: www.sdge.com
California Highway Patrol traffic and road closure information: cad.chp.ca.gov
County Animal Services emergency information: (619) 767-2675

NORTH COUNTY ---- The entire town of Ramona ---- more than 36,000 people ---- and hundreds of residents in surrounding areas were forced to flee their homes Sunday night after a Santa Ana-whipped fire burned through 5,000 acres on both sides of Highway 78, leaving blazing structures, power outages and dead animals in its wake.

View A Slide Show

The inferno, dubbed the Witch Creek fire by officials, was one of a dozen blazes scorching Southern California from Malibu to Mexico that prompted Gov. Arnold Schwarzenegger to declare a state of emergency in San Diego, Los Angeles, Orange, Riverside, San Bernardino, Santa Barbara and Ventura counties.

In East County, the so-called Harris fire had charred 20,000 acres in Potrero, leaving one civilian dead and at least 14 people ---- including four fighters ---- hospitalized. Further north, fires were burning in Malibu, San Fernando Valley, Fontana, Devore, Arrowhead and other areas, threatening homes and charring thousands of acres.

The Ramona-area fire turned into a wall of flames nearly instantly after it started just before 1 p.m. near Witch Creek Road. Within hours, 40 to 50 mph winds had whipped the blaze across 3,000 acres as it leapfrogged across Highway 78 in several places, fire officials said. At least 350 firefighters were working the fire lines Sunday in an effort to protect structures and allow evacuations.

The cause of the fire was under investigation, fire officials said.

The flames spread into two flanks that descended on Ramona, said Battalion Chief Kelly Zombro, of the California Department of Forestry and Fire Protection.

Flames surged westward between the areas charred by the 2003 Cedar fire, the 273,000-acre blaze that destroyed 2,400 homes and killed a firefighter and 14 other people. Sunday's flames, fed by gusts of up to 70 mph, were fueled by winds so strong that firefighting aircraft could not safely fly, Zombro said.

Thousands warned by phone

As the fire spread, officials used the county's Reverse 911 system ---- which is used to call residents in an emergency ---- to advise thousands of people to evacuate the areas of Ramona, Ramona Country Estates, Black Canyon, Witch Creek and other areas, sheriff's Lt. Phil Brust said. There were more than 36,000 residents in Ramona, according to the latest population figures compiled by the San Diego Association of Governments.

By late Sunday, parts of the San Pasqual Valley was evacuated and Poway residents were placed on alert.

Evacuation centers were set up at Escondido High School, 1535 North Broadway; and Steele Canyon High School, 12440 Campo Road in Spring Valley. Poor air quality prompted officials Sunday night to move an evacuation center at Poway High School to Mira Mesa High School.

The centers, set up by the American Red Cross, will remain open "as long as there is a need," spokeswoman Gayle Falkenthal said. Lodging, food, drinks and basic health services will be provided, she said.

An evacuation center set up at Escondido High School had more than 30 families by late evening, and authorities said they were anticipating up to 30 more families to show up during the night.

Adam Rosa said he and his parents evacuated their apartment on the east edge of Ramona at 8:30 p.m.

"The fire was right on the other side of the mountain from us when we left," he said. "Everything out there was all smoke and we couldn't breathe. When we were coming down the mountain we could see the mountain behind us."

Motels begin filling

Other families forced to evacuate their homes began trickling into area motels shortly after nightfall.

The front desk clerk at Motel 6 in Escondido said, for example, that by mid-evening four evacuating families had taken rooms at the 131-unit complex at 900 Quince Street.

"We're anticipating more as the evening goes on," the clerk said, adding that several members of one family told her they had to make several back-and-forth trips to rescue their animals because they only had one horse trailer. "It's pretty sad."

All schools in the Ramona and Poway Unified school districts were ordered closed today, as was the Palomar Mountain Elementary School and the Dehesa Charter School in Escondido.

Meanwhile, evacuation points for large animals and livestock were set up at the Lakeside rodeo grounds, at Highway 67 and Magnolia Avenue in Lakeside, and the Del Mar Fairgrounds said Tammy Glenn, public information officer for the county.

As the flames spread, local residents and state officials mounted an effort to rescue some of the hundreds of horses that live in rural ranches in the area.

Desperate efforts to save horses

Earlier in the day, Ramona residents Haley Van Houten and Shelee Lyon moved four horses in separate trailers from the Sierra South Horseshoeing School on Old Julian Highway to a south Ramona ranch. They returned for another load of horses but were not allowed back in.

"I know they mean well, but they don't have horses," Van Houten said of the officials blocking their path. Meanwhile, Lyon damaged the front tires on her vehicle while attempting to get past a tack strip set in the roadway by California Highway Patrol officers manning a road closure.

A second shelter for pets and smaller animals was established by the Escondido Humane Society at Poway High School, authorities said. It was unclear Sunday night whether the shelter was moved.

Authorities said anyone looking for general information on animal services should call 211. For emergencies, they said people should call county animal services at (619) 767-2675.

Power cut to protect firefighters

As of Sunday night, utility crews had also shut down power to more than 1,000 customers in Ramona, Santa Ysabel,

San Diego Country Estates, the La Jolla Reservation and Mesa Grande, San Diego Gas & Electric reported.

At least some of the outages were put in place so firefighters would not have to work around live powerlines, authorities said.

"It's just to make it safe for firefighters and our folks," said Don Parent, spokesman for the utility company. "As soon as we check and make sure it's safe, we'll re-energize them."

The county Air Pollution Control District alerted residents to high concentrations of fine particulates from the smoke, resulting in potentially poor air quality in areas affected by fire. Residents should limit physical activity or stay indoors to avoid exposure to smoke-laden air, authorities said.

The weather is expected to bring little relief today, as winds will be "pretty much the same," gusting at 50 mph during morning hours, 75 mph during the afternoon and slowing only to 55 mph at night, National Weather Service meteorologist Noel Isla said.

Building high pressure is creating humidity levels of less than 10 percent, and wind could blow smoke and sand, creating additional hazards for large vehicles.

Winds should weaken by Wednesday and temperatures should begin cooling by Thursday, the weather service reported.

Information on the fires is available at www.nctimes.com and www.sdcountyemergency.com. Residents can call 211 for non-emergency calls related to the fire. Cell phone calls should be directed to (858) 300-1211.

The Associated Press and staff writers Philip K. Ireland and Bob Masingale contributed to this report.

Contact staff writer Sarah Wilkins at (760) 740-3524 or swilkins@nctimes.com.

Roads closed because of Ramona-area wildfire include:

- Highway 78 at Magnolia Avenue

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- Highway 79 at Highway 78

- Old Julian Highway at Vista Ramona Road

- Highway 79 at Highway 76

---- Source: California Highway Patrol, as of 10:45 p.m.

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Local News

Smoke from wildfires prompts health advisory

HILLARY BORRUD
October 24, 2007 - 7:31PM

VICTORVILLE — With smoke, ash and particulate matter from wildfires drifting through the Victor Valley on Wednesday, the Mojave Desert Air Quality Management District issued an ongoing health advisory.

Employees at the air district said that the advisory will remain in effect until further notice, and changing weather conditions will continue to bring smoke into the desert through at least today.

"I wouldn't say it's going to get any better," air quality instrument technician Tony Malone said, referring to today's forecast.

While the health advisory is in effect, people with respiratory diseases such as asthma and the elderly and young children should avoid strenuous activities, according to the MDAQMD.

Residents in areas downwind from the smoke, including Adelanto, Apple Valley, Hesperia, Lucerne Valley, Phelan and Victorville, should stay indoors when possible with the windows closed and air conditioners on the recycled air setting.

Fred Wohosky, who provides weather forecasts for the MDAQMD, said at noon Wednesday that the high pressure system in Colorado that has caused Santa Ana conditions in California would be breaking down over the next 12 to 18 hours, making winds more variable.

"It really has the potential for air quality to be diminished," he said.

For updated information on air quality, call the MDAQMD at 245-1661, ext. 5067 or 245-1661 ext. 6717. Current health advisories are also at www.mdaqmd.ca.gov.

James Quigg / Staff Photographer
A firefighter hoses into a steep ravine while fighting the Slide Fire in Running Springs Wednesday afternoon.

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DEC 11 Stem Cell Agency Biotech Loan Task Force Meeting

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Expanding the Use of School-Based Clinics
School-based clinics improve access to primary care and mental health services, especially for low-income children. A new report explores their history and plans for expansion.

Public Health

October 25, 2007

Smoke From Wildfires Raising Health Concerns in Southern California

Smoke inhalation from California's wildfires is causing a spike in respiratory illnesses, but health experts maintain that the health problems are unlikely to lead to higher mortality rates, *USA Today* reports.

Researchers cited studies of previous wildfires in California and near Denver that found that residents experienced increases in asthma and other illnesses but that inhaling smoke did not increase the mortality rates over the short-term (Sternberg, *USA Today*, 10/25).

Meanwhile, public health officials and medical providers are recommending that elderly residents and people with respiratory problems stay indoors to limit the amount of smoke inhalation.

Health experts contend that particulate matter is the most dangerous byproduct of wildfires because it is invisible to the naked eye and can worsen symptoms of asthma, bronchitis and emphysema (Chang, AP/Salt Lake City *Deseret Morning News*, 10/24).

The effect of breathing the particles is not immediate, but several hospitals in San Diego County already have reported an increase in patients with respiratory symptoms.

Smita Desai, pulmonary and critical-care specialist at UC-San Diego Medical Center in Hillcrest, said cellular research of particulate matter has found a "tiny risk of increased cancer risk" but noted that further research is needed to better determine the long-term consequences (Clark, *San Diego Union-Tribune*, 10/25).

Broadcast Coverage

NPR's "All Things Considered" on Wednesday included a discussion with NPR correspondent Carrie Kahn about conditions for nursing home residents evacuated to Qualcomm Stadium in San Diego.

The segment also includes comments from a nursing home resident and a volunteer (Norris, "All Things Considered," NPR, 10/24).

Audio of the segment and expanded NPR coverage are available online.

Readers are invited to send feedback to: chl@chcf.org

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